

CLAIMS:

We claim:

1. A hearing aid, comprising:

5 a transducer implantable within a patient to stimulate a component of an auditory system;

a microphone to process acoustic sounds and generate frequency responses representative of the acoustic sounds; and

10 a signal processor to process at least one feedback frequency response from the microphone to generate at least one test parameter and use the at least one test parameter to determine at least one operational characteristic of the microphone, wherein the feedback frequency response is generated by the microphone in response to acoustic feedback generated in response to at least one test signal provided to the transducer.

15 2. The hearing aid of Claim 1 comprising:

a test signal generator to generate and provide the at least one test signal to the transducer, wherein the at least one test signal causes the transducer to stimulate the component of the auditory system and generate the acoustic feedback.

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3. The hearing aid of Claim 2 wherein the signal processor is configured to generate and provide the at least one test signal to the transducer.

4. The hearing aid of Claim 3 wherein the at least one test signal is provided at a predetermined frequency to generate the acoustic feedback at a predetermined tone.

5 5. The hearing aid of Claim 3 wherein the at least one test signal is swept across a predetermined frequency range to generate the acoustic feedback at a plurality of predetermined tones.

6. The hearing aid of Claim 3 wherein the at least one test signal comprises:  
10 one of noise and pseudorandom noise.

7. The hearing aid of Claim 3 wherein the at least one test signal comprises:  
at least one chirp.

15 8. The hearing aid of Claim 1 wherein the at least one operational characteristic of the microphone comprises:

changing characteristics of acoustic frequency responses of the microphone generated in response to the acoustic sounds

20 9. The hearing aid of Claim 8 wherein the signal processor is configured to use the at least one test parameter to generate drive signals for the transducer that compensate for the changing characteristics of the acoustic frequency responses of the microphone.

10. The hearing aid system of Claim 9 wherein the at least one test parameter comprises:

at least one delta frequency representative of a difference between the feedback frequency response and a calibration frequency response.

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11. The hearing aid system of Claim 10 wherein the at least one test parameter comprises:

at least one delta frequency representative of a difference between an average of a plurality of feedback frequency responses and the calibration

10 frequency response.

12. The hearing aid system of Claim 11 wherein the signal processor is configured to use the at least one delta frequency to generate drive signals for the transducer that compensate for the changing characteristics of the acoustic

15 frequency responses according to prescriptive parameters for the patient.

13. The hearing aid system of Claim 10 wherein the signal processor includes an upper and lower threshold frequency response, and

if the feedback frequency response is within the upper and lower  
20 threshold frequency response, the signal processor processes the feedback frequency response to generate the at least one delta frequency, and

if the feedback frequency response is outside the upper and lower threshold frequency response, the signal processor continues to use a previous feedback frequency response.

5 14. The hearing aid system of Claim 1 wherein the signal processor is a digital signal processor.

15. In a hearing aid, a method of compensating for changing characteristics of frequency responses generated by a microphone in response to an acoustic  
10 input, the method comprising:

conducting a test session to determine changes in the frequency responses of the microphone;

generating at least one test parameter representative of the changes in the frequency responses of the microphone; and

15 using the at least one test parameter to generate drive signals for a transducer that compensate for the changes in the frequency responses of the microphone.

16. The method of Claim 15 wherein the step of conducting the test session  
20 comprises the steps of:

generating and providing a test signal to a transducer;

driving the transducer with the test signal to generate acoustic feedback;

detecting the acoustic feedback in the microphone;

generating a feedback frequency response in the microphone; and  
comparing the feedback frequency response with the test signal to  
determine the at least one test parameter.

5 17. The method of Claim 13 wherein the step of generating and providing the  
test signal comprises:

generating and providing the test signal at a predetermined frequency to  
generate the acoustic feedback at a predetermined tone.

10 18. The method of Claim 15 wherein the step of generating and providing the  
test signal comprises:

generating and providing the test signal at a plurality of predetermined  
frequencies to generate the acoustic feedback at a plurality of predetermined  
tones.

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19. The method of Claim 16 wherein the step of generating the at least one  
test parameter comprises:

computing at least one delta frequency representative of a difference  
between the feedback frequency response and a calibration frequency response.

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20. The method of Claim 18 wherein the step of generating the at least one test parameter comprises:

5 computing at least one delta frequency representative of a difference between an average of a plurality of feedback frequency responses and the calibration frequency response.

21. The method of Claim 19 wherein the step of using the at least one test parameter to generate drive signals for the transducer that compensate for the changes in the frequency responses of the microphone comprises:

10 processing acoustic frequency responses from the microphone using the at least one delta frequency.

22. The method of Claim 19 comprising:

15 comparing the feedback frequency response to an upper and lower threshold frequency response, and

if the feedback frequency response is within the upper and lower threshold frequency response, using the feedback frequency response to generate the at least one delta frequency, and

20 if the feedback frequency response is outside the upper and lower threshold frequency response, using a previous feedback frequency response.

23. A hearing aid comprising:

a transducer implantable within a patient to stimulate a component of an auditory system;

5 a microphone to process acoustic sounds and generate frequency responses; and

a signal processor to process at least one feedback frequency response from the microphone to generate drive signals for the transducer that compensate for changed characteristics of the microphone frequency responses, wherein the feedback frequency response is generated by the microphone in  
10 response to acoustic feedback generated in response to at least one test signal provided to the transducer.

24. The hearing aid of Claim 23 comprising:

a test signal generator to generate and provide the at least one test signal  
15 to the transducer that causes the transducer to stimulate the component of the auditory system and generate the acoustic feedback.

25. The hearing aid of Claim 23 wherein the signal processor is configured to generate and provide the at least one test signal to the transducer that causes  
20 the transducer to stimulate the component of the auditory system and generate the acoustic feedback.

26. The hearing aid of Claim 24 wherein the at least one test signal is provided at a predetermined frequency to generate the acoustic feedback at a predetermined tone.

5 27. The hearing aid of Claim 24 wherein the at least one test signal is swept across a predetermined frequency range to generate the acoustic feedback at a plurality of predetermined tones.

10 28. The hearing aid of Claim 24 wherein the at least one test signal is one of noise and pseudorandom noise.

29. The hearing aid of Claim 24 wherein the at least one test signal is a chirp.

15 30. The hearing aid system of Claim 23 wherein the at least one test parameter comprises:

at least one delta frequency representative of a difference between the feedback frequency response and a calibration frequency response.

20 31. The hearing aid system of Claim 23 wherein the at least one test parameter comprises:

at least one delta frequency representative of a difference between an average of a plurality of feedback frequency responses and the calibration frequency response.



32. The hearing aid system of Claim 30 wherein the signal processor is configured to use the at least one delta frequency to generate the drive signals for the transducer that compensate for the changing characteristics of the frequency responses according to prescriptive parameters for the patient.

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33. The hearing aid system of Claim 30 wherein the signal processor includes an upper and lower threshold frequency response, and

if the feedback frequency response is within the upper and lower threshold frequency response, the signal processor processes the feedback

10 frequency response to generate the at least one delta frequency, and

if the feedback frequency response is outside the upper and lower threshold frequency response, the signal processor continues to use a previous feedback frequency response.

15 34. The hearing aid system of Claim 23 wherein the signal processor is a digital signal processor.

35. A frequency equalization system comprising:

a microphone to process acoustic sounds and generate frequency  
20 response; and

a signal processor comprising:

a test signal generator to generate and provide a test signal;

equalization logic to process a feedback frequency response from the microphone representative of the test signal to generate an equalization matrix; and

frequency shaping logic to use the equalization matrix to process an acoustic frequency response from the microphone to generate a processed signal that compensates for changing characteristics of the acoustic frequency response.

36. The system of Claim 35 wherein the test signal is provided at a predetermined frequency to generate the feedback frequency response at a predetermined tone.

37. The system of Claim 35, wherein the at least one test signal is swept across a predetermined frequency range to generate feedback frequency responses at a plurality of predetermined tones.

38. The system of Claim 35 wherein the at least one test signal is one of noise and pseudorandom noise.

39. The system of Claim 35 wherein the at least one test signal is a chirp.

40. The system of Claim 35 wherein the equalization matrix includes at least one delta frequency representative of a difference between the feedback frequency response and a calibration frequency response.

5 41. The system of Claim 35 wherein the equalization matrix includes at least one delta frequency representative of a difference between an average of a plurality of feedback frequency responses and the calibration frequency response.

10 42. The system of Claim 35 wherein the equalization logic includes an upper and lower threshold frequency response and if the feedback frequency response is within the upper and lower threshold frequency response, the equalization logic processes the feedback frequency response to generate the equalization matrix and if the feedback frequency response is outside the upper and lower  
15 threshold frequency response, the equalization logic continues to use a previous feedback frequency response.

43. A software product for a frequency equalization system, the product comprising:

20 test signal generator instructions operational when executed on a processor to direct the processor to generate and provide a test signal;

equalization logic instructions operational when executed on the processor to direct the processor to process a feedback frequency response

from a microphone representative of the test signal to generate an equalization matrix;

frequency shaping logic instructions operational when executed on the processor to use the equalization matrix to process an acoustic frequency response from the microphone to generate a processed signal that compensates for changing characteristics of the acoustic frequency response; and

a storage medium operation to store the test signal generator instructions, the equalization logic instructions, and frequency shaping logic instructions.

44. The product of Claim 43 wherein the test signal generator instructions are operational when executed on the processor to direct the processor to generate and provide the test signal at a predetermined frequency to generate the feedback frequency response at a predetermined tone.

45. The product of Claim 43 wherein the test signal generator instructions are operational when executed on the processor to direct the processor to sweep the test signal across a predetermined frequency range to generate a plurality of feedback frequency responses at a plurality of predetermined tones.

46. The product of Claim 43 wherein the equalization logic instructions are operational when executed on the processor to direct the processor to process the feedback frequency response to compute a difference between the feedback frequency response and a calibration frequency response.

47. The product of Claim 43 wherein the equalization logic instructions are operational when executed on the processor to direct the processor to process a plurality of feedback frequency responses to compute a difference between an average feedback frequency response and the calibration frequency response.